

# MEMOIR OF JAMIESON BOYD HURRY

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*Reprinted from*  
THE WOAD PLANT AND ITS DYE

B. xxiv. Har

Hinton Firs,  
9, Manor Road,  
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With Mrs. Hurry's Compts.  
✓ Kind regards

MEMOIR OF  
JAMIESON BOYD HURRY







*J. B. Hurry.*

JAMIESON BOYD HURRY, 1857-1930



## MEMOIR OF JAMIESON BOYD HURRY

JAMIESON BOYD HURRY, son of the Rev. Nicholas Hurry of Liverpool, was born on the 8th June, 1857. He was educated, first at Neuchâtel, Switzerland, and afterwards at the City of London School, from which he passed to St. John's College, Cambridge, with which so many great names in science and literature are associated. Hurry from boyhood had the taste and an exceptional capacity for medicine. In 1882 he graduated M.B. at Cambridge, and in the same year obtained his diploma as a Member of the Royal College of Surgeons of England. On leaving Cambridge, Hurry completed his medical education at St. Bartholomew's Hospital, where he became resident obstetric physician under James Matthews Duncan, who since 1877 had been senior obstetric physician to the hospital. It has just been said that at Bart's Hurry 'completed' his medical education: it was there completed merely in the academic sense, for Hurry himself held that in so progressive a science as medicine, education must never cease. All his life he followed the progress of medical science with studious care, and to the day of his death kept in close touch with current medical literature and with his active professional colleagues.

On leaving the hospital, Hurry's first appointment was that of Ship's Surgeon, and in the course of a year he had travelled to Australia, India, and South America, and thus acquired the taste for travel that he was able to gratify in later years. Hurry's travels were not those of an idle tourist. During his visits to America, Egypt, Morocco, and almost every corner of Europe, he sowed

the seeds that bore fruit in his later works. He took a keen interest in medical schools, in sociological problems, in medical and economic botany, in history and archaeology, and he was thereby enabled to treat the many topics on which he afterwards wrote with a singularly broad and catholic outlook.

Before passing on, it may here be recorded that at Cambridge Hurry graduated B.A. in 1879, with honours in the Natural Science Tripos, took the M.B. in 1882, and was admitted M.R.C.S. in the same year, as already noted. In 1884 he became D.P.H. and took his M.A. degree, M.D. in 1885, and B.Ch. in 1890.

Thus equipped with academic qualifications, but still more highly endowed with energy, enthusiasm, and ability, Hurry settled after his term as Ship's Surgeon to medical practice in Reading in 1885, where he entered into partnership with the late Mr. George May, F.R.C.S.

In Reading almost the whole of his active life was spent, for he remained there until 1926. To Hurry's kindness, skill, and sympathy as a medical practitioner many past and present residents of Reading could abundantly testify. He was, as will be seen in the sequel, a man of many interests and tastes, but he never allowed either his studies or his intellectual relaxations to encroach upon his professional cares.

The name of Jamieson Hurry is particularly associated with a remarkable series of works on Vicious Circles—the evil that begets evil—in various phases of medicine and sociology. He wrote a number of monographs in which he clearly brought out the interaction and reflex action of causes and effects. *Vicious Circles in Disease*, the first of these monographs, appeared in 1911, reached a third edition in 1919, and was translated



into French, Spanish, and Italian. *Vicious Circles of Neurasthenia and their Treatment* and *Vicious Circles in Sociology* followed in 1915, and two years later appeared *Poverty and its Vicious Circles*, which reached a second edition in 1921, and has been translated into French, Italian, Japanese, and Chinese.

It was characteristic of Hurry that every subject in which he became interested was forthwith made the object of deep study and reflection. His critical and logical methods of handling his themes are familiar to all readers of his books, but in addition he had a mind of singular clarity and originality. It did not satisfy him merely to state a case, or to direct attention to some anomaly or defect that called for amendment; his fertile brain had always a remedy to suggest, and his attractive and polished literary style lent charm to every subject he handled. Thus, when in the course of his professional work he was frequently in contact with the problems of nursing, he did not merely grumble at the defects in the current methods of the time, he studied their causes and proposed remedies, many of which have with profit become generally adopted, and his *District Nursing on a Provident Basis* (1898) was welcomed and widely read. Similarly his association with various scientific and medical societies led him to examine their structure and functions, and he published as a result *The Ideals and Organization of a Medical Society* (1913).

Reading is the home of one of the oldest medical societies in this country—the Reading Pathological Society. During the whole of his long residence there, Hurry was an active and helpful member of that body, and was its president from 1907 to 1910. He was deeply impressed with the potentialities of such societies, and

his special interest in that of his own town caused him to seek out and record the story of its past. Thus in 1909 he published his *History of the Reading Pathological Society*.

History was a subject that had great charms for Hurry. His wide literary knowledge, his great experience in travel, his meticulous and industrious habit of note-taking, all conspired to make him an ideal historian—an historian of the type that can animate the past and can cause ruins, charters, and dusty records to reveal their secrets of busy life and human emotion. He took the keenest interest in Reading Abbey—now shorn of its glory and reduced to shapeless ruins, but once one of the most considerable monastic foundations of this country. In 1901 he published his *Reading Abbey*, an attractive and well-illustrated volume. It deals not only with the archaeology and architecture of the building, but conjures up a vivid picture of the daily life in that venerable Monastery, before religious and political persecution and the relentless hand of time had gripped it and closed its life for ever. There is no phase of the history and antiquities of the Abbey that is not fully dealt with: its history is detailed in chronological sequence, its endowments and privileges, its role in the social and religious life of the town, its seals, charters, coinage, relics, and library, and its fate after the Dissolution, are all fully dealt with and endowed with animation and interest. But this book is not the only one concerned with the Abbey and town that Hurry's pen produced. In 1906 appeared his *Rise and Fall of Reading Abbey*, and this was followed by *King Henry Beauclerc and Reading Abbey* in 1919, and by *The Trial by Combat of Henry de Essex and Robert de Montfort at*



*Reading Abbey* in 1919, and by *The Octocentenary of Reading Abbey* in 1921. Every Whit-Monday for many years Hurry was wont to conduct a large party of his fellow-townsmen through the ruins of the Abbey, when the now famous canon 'Sumer is icumen in' was sung. Of this charming piece of mediaeval prosody Hurry published an illustrated edition with musical notation in 1913.

But of all Hurry's activities in connexion with stimulating an interest in the historic past of the Abbey and town, the most notable is his gift of a series of ten paintings illustrating episodes in the history of the Abbey which he presented to the town and which are now displayed in the Reading Municipal Art Gallery. The paintings are of high merit, and most of them were exhibited at the Royal Academy.

There were many other services that Hurry rendered to Reading. He was honorary consulting librarian of the Reading Pathological Society from 1915, was a keen member of the Council of Reading University, and a Justice of the Peace for the Borough.

At 'Westfield', his residence, he gave expression to one of his hobbies in establishing an educational garden, where he assembled from all parts of the world tropical and economic plants, especially those that yield food, fibre, dyes, medicines, and industrial material for the service of man. Here also he established a museum of the products of such plants. The botanic garden and museum, freely placed at the disposal of all intelligent visitors, attracted many comers from far and near. A catalogue and handbook, written with characteristic lucidity, enhanced its value. After Hurry's removal from Reading he presented the collection of plants to

the Corporation of Bournemouth, where it is now housed and cared for in the King's Park Nurseries at Boscombe.

Hurry's life-long interest in economic botany found its last expression in the admirable monograph of the history and use of Woad, which he had practically completed and which was actually in the printer's hands at the time of his death.

Medical history was another subject which had great attractions for Hurry. To this subject he made a notable contribution in the last work published during his lifetime—*Imhotep, the Vizier and Physician of King Zoser and afterwards the Egyptian God of Medicine*. It was in connexion with this work that the present writer came into close contact with Hurry, and was enabled to see at first hand the depth of his learning and the kindness and geniality of his character.

Hurry entered a new field in the preparation of this book—Egyptology. He had acquired in a short space of time a truly wonderful appreciation of the records and achievements of the ancient Egyptians, and had explored far and wide the vast and technical literature of Egyptology. When the second edition of the book was in preparation Hurry discussed with the writer of this memoir every detail of the book, and submitted it to him both in manuscript and proof. As most of the collaboration had necessarily to be carried out at a distance, a voluminous and delightful correspondence ensued. Hurry's deep but unostentatious learning, his sincere and kindly expressed gratitude for the least help received from others, are manifest in all his letters. He visited London from time to time in order to consult books in the British Museum or other libraries, and on



most of these occasions plans, ideas, and details of production were fully discussed with the writer. In this, as in all his books, Hurry spared neither time nor expense in ensuring that the ultimate publication should be both intellectually and physically as near his ideal as he could make it. He was insistent that the Architecture of a book, as he termed it, was quite as important as its subject-matter, and he paid most careful attention to the classification of the chapters and paragraphs, to the placing of the illustrations, to their material production, and to the index. He did not shrink from trouble or expense in carrying out these ideals. Since Hurry's death the writer has seen his private notes and papers, as well as his correspondence in connexion with *Imhotep*: these convey an idea of the painstaking and meticulous care that he lavished upon the publication of a book. Of him it may be truly said *Omne quod tetigit, ornavit*.

Of Hurry's domestic life none but a member of his family is entitled to speak: it was, indeed, singularly happy. He married in 1892 Gertrude Louisa, daughter of the late Arthur Hill, J.P., of Erleigh Court, Reading, a niece of Miss Octavia Hill, whose name goes down in history as one of the greatest philanthropists and sociologists of her age. In 1926, both Hurry and his wife being in impaired health, he gave up his home in Reading and removed to Bournemouth. Even in his last years, in spite of suffering and great physical disability, he was always cheery and optimistic in disposition: his smile and genial manner never forsook him to the last. He had boundless stores of encouragement and helpfulness for all who came to him, and his never-failing courtesy was justly appreciated by all he met. If



those around him were apt to be disheartened, some cheering words were always ready: 'Look on the bright side, the sun is always there behind the clouds', or 'Have music in your heart'. These were not mere sententious formulae: they mirrored the deepest feelings of his heart. He was especially fond of young people, helping them alike in work and play, and always ready to encourage them in their hobbies, natural history being especially near his heart. Although his principles were of the strictest, he had the fullest sympathy with the views of others, and always took a broad-minded and non-contentious attitude in controversial subjects.

Hurry's modest and unostentatious nature would shrink from any elaboration of the numerous and generous gifts that he bestowed upon societies and institutions. In deference to his own wishes, therefore, no details will here be given (although many are known to the writer), but it must be recorded that at Cambridge Hurry founded the Michael Foster Research Studentship, and it is characteristic of him that his own munificence goes down to posterity, not in his own name, but in the name of another.

Jamieson Hurry passed away somewhat suddenly on the 13th February 1930 at 'Hinton Firs', Bournemouth. He was laid to rest at Boscombe Cemetery.

The deep sorrow that his death has inevitably caused to his wife, his son, and his daughter, will be tempered in some measure by the memories they will ever cherish of a loving and considerate husband and father, and they and his many friends will be cheered by the thought of a noble life of service to his fellow-men.

And in conclusion, the writer of this brief memoir must be permitted to speak in the first person. At

Mrs. Hurry's request I have written this sketch of the life of a man whom I am proud to recall as one of my dearest friends. The fulfilment of this request has been a sincere gratification to me, and I make this little tribute to the cherished memory of an unselfish worker in the service of others, a true scholar, a skilled doctor, and a kind and gentle friend.

WARREN R. DAWSON.

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